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COMMUNAL FISHING AND FISHING MAGIC IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES OF THE GOLD COAST.

By M. Fortes.

[2] Social Anthropology, like every science, deals with abstractions. Religion, magic, social organization, law, etc., are not directly accessible to field observation *in toto* and in their conceptual purity. What the anthropologist sees in the field are social situations—the particular experiments, as it were, of a culture. These are composite events, patterns in which several aspects of culture and a variety of institutions and techniques are represented. When two friends stop to greet each other, we have a very simple situation of brief duration representing merely an instance of etiquette. But when we consider the social processes which lead up to and culminate in the relationship of marriage, we are faced with a whole series of situations linked in a temporal sequence, involving etiquette, economic techniques (gift exchanges), legal institutions (bride wealth), religious institutions (sacrifice to ancestor spirits), moral and social norms, and so forth. Such configurations, varying as these examples indicate from simple and momentary situations which represent a single phase of an institution to complex series of events which epitomise the whole culture in all its aspects, form the raw material of anthropological field work. To establish the characteristics of an institution like bride-wealth we abstract the relevant components of many "marriage configurations"—i.e., configurations of a single type—and regard the other components as of subordinate or even negligible significance. To consider a system like religion, magic, or social organization we require to abstract the relevant components of a wide range of configurations of different types: births, marriages, funerals, economic situations, ritual festivals, etc.

These abstractions, essential for the generalised descriptions of institutions or aspects of culture, have been the main concern of anthropologists. In its extreme form, *e.g.*, in the comparative work of Tylor or Frazer, this has led writers to strip what they consider relevant facts completely of all cultural context. In the best functional studies interest has been focussed primarily upon the correlation of institutions with one another, and upon plotting the relationship of particular institutions to the whole of a culture. The fact that the social situations susceptible of direct observation in the field, besides providing the raw materials for sociological generalization, also constitute a problem for investigation has been largely overlooked.

Every type of social situation exhibits a definite structure. The component institutions, techniques, and norms of behaviour manifested in it are inter-related in a manner specific to that situation. In functional terminology, the "proximate function" of

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121 each within the context of the particular type of social situation is specific to it and can be determined only from the analysis of the situation itself. It may differ considerably from its "institutional function" in relation to the culture as a whole. Thus the rules of exogamy viewed in relation to the entire social organization of a people may demonstrably serve to emphasize and preserve the integrity of an unilateral kinship group. But in a particular situation, a man barred from marriage with a woman he desires may enter into an illicit sexual intrigue with her, which may lead to dissension within the kinship group. In such a case the "proximate function" of the rules of exogamy appears to be the very contrary of their "institutional function." This is an hypothetical instance; but it will suffice to illustrate what we mean when we say that the components of any type of social situation are inter-related in a manner specific to it or that it exhibits a definite structure. The aim of the present paper is to analyze the structure of a situation which recurs with some frequency in the life of a tribe recently visited by the writer.

226 221 [805] Among the Tallensi, a tribe of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, the communal fishing expeditions which take place every year are events of this kind. They extend over a period of about a month, between the close of the dry season and the commencement of the heavy rains. During this month which coincides with most of the native lunar month *Sigkpóŋ* ("Dry rains"), and the European month of April, rain falls sporadically (five times, at varying intervals, in 1934, a dry year) but sufficiently for the sowing of early millet and some of the minor crops. Sowing demands the concentration of all energies of the family for a day or two after a fall of rain; then it is discontinued until the next fall of rain. Besides sowing, other technological and economic activities compete with fishing during this month. House repairs and rebuilding are still in progress and of course the markets, which take place on two days out of three within the tribal area, are in full swing. All these activities are equally shared by men and women, assisted by the children of both sexes.

226 262 Fishing therefore is not an activity of an economic off-season. Its calendrical incidence depends primarily on the technique employed, which is suitable only for shallow pools; and the pools are shallowest at the end of the dry season. It is, also, only indirectly correlated with the diminution in food supplies which becomes general during the "dry rains", since fish, like meat, is valued as a delicacy and never as a substitute for the staple cereal foods. In any case, the catch is usually too small to influence the economy of food supplies materially. Nevertheless, the luxury value of fish furnishes one of the main inducements to join the fishing expeditions.

226 But the greatest attraction of these fishing expeditions to young and old, men and women, is the excitement and thrill they provide, the immediate pleasure of participation in a communal enterprise with the possibility, however remote, of some gain.

133 226 The pools called *lie* in the bed of the White Volta River. When the rains cease the water level gradually sinks till eventually only a series of pools divided from one another

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by dry stretches of sand remains. The river during the rains is simply known as *mɔŋar*, "river"; but each pool has a name extended to the corresponding division of the river banks on both sides.

The end of the dry season and the commencement of the agricultural season receives social affirmation in a great ritual festival the *Gɔlib*, celebrated by one group of Tallensi clans. The series of rites and ceremonies includes a communal and ritual fishing of a pool *Gɔlimbiuŋ*, dedicated to *Gɔlib* (not in the Volta). The fishing itself is a ritual performance in which the size of the catch counts for very little. But this inaugurates the season of the utilitarian fishing expeditions, none of which may precede the fishing of *Gɔlimbiuŋ*. The magical intention of *Gɔlib* is to ensure the fertility of crops, women, and livestock, success in all food-getting enterprises, security from danger, disease and death. Fishing is frequently mentioned in the exhortations addressed to the ancestor spirits during the *Gɔlib* rites. The *Gɔlib*, however, is more in the nature of a general blessing than of specifically efficacious magic.

Some ten to fourteen days after the close of *Gɔlib* the first of the communal fishing expeditions takes place. Every owner decides for himself the day on which he wishes to fish his pool. Thus it often happens that two or more fishing expeditions to different parts of the Volta occur on the same day. During the month I recorded the occurrence of ten expeditions; but as many more certainly escaped my notice. I accompanied three of these expeditions.

An impending fishing expedition is announced through the two main channels customary for the publication of such events. A day or two in advance, after darkness falls, the owner causes it to be cried (*tuol*) from the house-tops of his settlement. The news subsequently spreads throughout the country, from mouth to mouth. But alternatively or in addition, he employs an even more effective means of publicity, the market. Members of his family and neighbours are sent on market day to inform the friends and acquaintances they meet. Soon it is known to every person in the market, to which people throng from every quarter of the Tallensi and neighbouring tribal areas.

A message may also be sent to the *Tɔŋnaba*, the chief of highest rank in the Tallensi country; but this is an act of deference not a political obligation, and is observed principally by the minor chiefs who have a clan relationship with Tongo. So also the chief of Kurugu, Paramount Chief of the division, is usually apprised.

So much for the economic, seasonal and public context of fishing. On the appointed day ceaseless processions of men, women, adolescent boys and girls, and even children of 9 and 10 years, converge upon the selected pool. Some of them come from eight or nine miles away by winding paths through low but rough and sparsely inhabited bush. The men and boys carry bows and arrows, spears and axes, as well as their fishing nets, partly as a precaution against meeting with a hyena or leopard or some game, partly out of habit. The women, balancing their fishing baskets on the head, set out with the men. But as the procession swells they tend to drop behind to join their fellows, and come along

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226 at a leisurely pace, stopping every now and then to pluck bunches of soft, heavy leaves. These they stick into their waistbands, in front and behind, as a substitute for the perineal belt which they remove to prevent its being damaged in the water. The throng presses gaily on, joking, laughing, and conversing.

226 515 562 834 Several hours before the fishing is due to begin the well-wooded banks of the river swarm with a jostling multitude. The small and very shallow pools scattered in the sandy reaches between the large fishing pools are filled with bathers. The segregation of the sexes, inchoate at the time of the approach to the pool, now becomes more explicit. The women tend to congregate apart from the men though communication between the two groups is perfectly free and frequent, and they bathe in different pools from the men. In explanation men declare with a smirk, "so that we can't see each other's sexual parts," but the close proximity to each other of the two groups of bathers and their unabashed bearing contradicts this allegation. Indeed nakedness is never a source of shame, though modesty requires a woman who has had children to cover the genitalia. But the men thus hint obscurely at the real explanation: the sexual dichotomy which runs through the whole culture, expressing itself in the division of labour and as now in a spontaneous but not rigid social segregation at certain times. It will be seen later that this principle emerges graphically in the actual technique of fishing. In the case of one pool, fished on two successive days, it took the extreme form of barring women altogether on the first day, on ritual grounds.

226 578 Besides the division in terms of sex, a distribution in accordance with political cleavages can be observed. Broadly speaking, the tribe is divided into two large political aggregates, the *Namoos* and the *Tallis* (the "real Tallensi"), each comprising several settlements or "lands" (*ten*, pl. *tes*). When the number of people is large, as in the first expedition of the season, each settlement occupies its own traditional place by the river, *Namoos* on one bank, *Tallis* on the other, more or less. In the small expeditions the groups merge more. Again there is nothing rigid about this political segregation. Bonds of kinship and of marriage unite every individual of the one group to the other group; but the disposition of the contingents nevertheless expresses a traditional though latent opposition between the two groups which requires little provocation to flare up.

461 322 While some bathe and others lounge about, conversing with friends, or the young girls flirt with the young men, many employ themselves usefully. Some men cut thick withes to insert into their fishing nets, others cut hoe shafts or axe shafts, shaping them roughly, to carry them home for finishing. Since the agricultural season is just beginning there is a ready sale for these articles. Some hack down saplings for rafters, some strip lengths of bark from the *bayana* trees, if any are about, for making the rough rope used in thatching, while others search for trees and shrubs used as household medicines, and many women begin to collect bundles of firewood to take back with them. The geographical setting of the fishing expedition thus creates a subsidiary economic situation which ensures that the day is not wasted, even if no fish are caught.

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About noon, the owner of the pool arrives, usually quite unceremonially, followed by kinsmen and kinswomen. The owner of the first pool to be fished in 1934 was a minor chief of the *Namoos* group, the *Bolgraana*, who had only recently been installed. To mark this, his first fishing expedition, he arrived escorted by musicians and in the full splendour of his red cap, the prime badge of his rank, and a gaudy gown. The musicians at once became the centre of an eager crowd which soon disposed itself in a dance, while the chief proceeded to his seat under a tree near the bank, the traditional place "where my ancestors (former chiefs) used to sit," he explained. The owner of a pool always registers his claims, in the first instance, by thus taking up his traditional seat, though he need not remain there once the fishing commences.

The multitude is now all keyed up, ready for the plunge. People begin to move about, a tumult of conversation rises from the far side of the river, showing how intense is the anticipatory excitement. As yet not a single person has dared to enter the pool, except at its very fringe to get a drink of water. But the most important preparatory activity is still to come—the magic. The owner is discussing this and other matters with half a dozen elders and men of rank, kinsmen and clansmen from several *Namoos* settlements, or, if he belongs to the *Tallis* group, from *Tallis* settlements. The groups never mix in this sort of situation, in which political, legal, and ritual prerogatives are canvassed. Nevertheless the discussion is not private, nor is its subject matter stereotyped. But its purpose is clear: to affirm the owner's rights. The nature and basis of these rights were formulated explicitly and with vigour in one such discussion: So and so, the chief, owns this pool. His ancestors held the chieftainship before him and owned the pool; he was invested by the Paramount Chief according to the prescribed and traditionally ordained procedure; therefore he owns the pool, as his ancestors did before him, and is consequently entitled to the traditionally fixed tribute, the first fish of respectable size which anyone catches. Nobody must cheat or fight about a fish, as was done in the previous expedition. All this is repeated over and over in rhetorical monologue by each member of the *extempore* council. It is, of course, perfectly well known to everybody, and, what is more curious, the speakers seem to address themselves entirely to their own circle, some of whom will not even enter the water, and all of whom will receive a share of the chief's tribute if the catch is a good one. The purpose of the discussion is apparently not publicity but psychological—assuring the owner that his rights are acknowledged, encouraging him, demonstrating to him that the most respected citizens are on his side and on the side of the traditional guarantees of property rights.

Now comes the crucial act of the series leading up to the actual fishing, the performance of the magical rites. The officiant has been waiting for the owner's word to start at the appointed, traditionally hallowed place, on the bank or by the waterside, surrounded by a number of men and boys of his own lineage, all descendants of the ancestor who originally acquired the magic. There are a number of typical features—

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typical both of the particular magic and of all Tallensi magico-religious rites—but also many variations in the rites, the apparatus, and the personnel, from instance to instance. Morphologically, the essential and recurrent constituents of every magical rite are the apparatus (*bayar*), the medicine (*tiim*), the sacrifice (*kaab*, vb.), and the invocation (*ka*). The fetish mobilised in this situation is a *Ba'ar*, which may be translated as *Clamp*. Its material vehicle (the *bayar*) usually comprises a medicine pot, a tree stump, and a large stone, at the owner's house, together with some portable objects such as a cow's tail and an axe shaft encased in crocodile skin and greasy with the blood of sacrifices and anointings of medicine. These are brought along to the river and have obvious symbolic reference to the notion of the *Ba'ar* as holding down or inhibiting dangerous creatures and men, just as an axe-head is tightly clamped on to the shaft.[1] The magical performance *in situ* is the culmination of a series of magical and religious rites commenced earlier in the day or even on the previous day at the houses of the owner of the pool and of the magical specialist. A day or two in advance, the owner of the pool, assisted by elders of his family, consults a diviner to discover what sacrifices to make to his ancestor spirits in order that nothing untoward should spoil the fishing. He will learn also what animals to provide for the sacrifices to be made by the magical specialist. Usually it will be a number of chickens. In the special circumstances of the *Bolgraana's* first fishing expedition he had to give a goat to be sacrificed by the owner of the fetish. The latter sacrifices at his own compound where he prepares the medicines—roots, bark or twigs of several species of trees. The rest of the magical rites can be observed at the fishing pool. The rites are private, performed without the cognizance of, or any display of interest by, the multitude assembled for the fishing. Those who happen to be near pay no attention, even when they are not asked to move off. This is characteristic of Tallensi magic, ownership of which is inviolable.

The officiant mixes some millet-flour in a calabashful of water scooped from the pool to be fished and begins to recite his invocation in a low and hortatory voice. He addresses the *bayar*, the material objects dedicated to the ancestor who originally possessed the magic. His invocation is not a fixed spell. He improvises according to his gifts and experience. But the theme and the manner of the invocation are stereotyped. He calls upon his male ancestors by name in ascendant order, stressing particularly the original owner of the magic by frequently calling his name in the course of his invocation. He explains the occasion, and half entreating half commanding, exhorts them to drive crocodiles and dangerous fish into their holes or out of the pool so that no one should be injured, to prevent fighting between the people about to enter the water, and to give them a good catch. There is much repetition in the invocation and the officiant is constantly prompted by his co-adjutors. Calling upon his ancestors to come and accept the sacrifice, he pours some of the flour water on to the *bayar* objects or directly into the

[1] Note the distinction: *bayar* is the generic term for every kind of sacred object: *Ba'ar* is the name of this particular fetish.

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pool, sips a little, and passes the rest to his co-adjutors. These, who are all members of his own paternal family, and may number as many as twenty men, have been treated with the medicine at home—they eat a little mixed with millet porridge, and smear a little over the solar plexus. Then he plants the axe shaft firmly by the water-side, thus symbolically pinioning all dangerous creatures and men and setting up the fetish in closest proximity to its scene of action.

Before anyone not magically protected can enter the water, however, the pool itself must be rendered safe. From a small gourd the officiant gives a little medicine to each of several of his younger co-adjutors. Taking the medicine in their mouths they wade into the pool in a line. Every few minutes they scoop a handful of water which they take in the mouth and squirt out, this way and that; and as they wade, or in the deeper parts swim, they cry out "emerge, emerge, vanish, vanish," to expel crocodiles and other dangerous fish. They traverse the whole pool, watched with close attention by the crowd of fishers, who begin to press forward restlessly. But if anyone dares to step into the water, he is immediately rebuked by the owner of the pool who stands on a high vantage point watching the progress of the boys in the water.

As the boys approach the bank, the suspense of the waiting multitude is at its highest. The owner must give the signal for the general descent into the pool; but he may suddenly burst into an harangue, reminding the people of his ancestral and chiefly rights of ownership, warning them against fighting, and threatening anyone who conceals his catch or otherwise cheats him of his legitimate tribute. Even kinsmen[1]—sisters' sons, brothers-in-law, and so forth—must not abuse the ties of kinship by hiding the fish they catch, he commands.

Then he gives the signal. "Descend," he calls out and the men pressing round him surge into the water with a shout which becomes an exhilarating wordless chant. On every side the chant is taken up and the men sweep into the pool holding their nets aloft. The chant soon subsides but is taken up every now and again in the course of the afternoon. Behind the men follow the women, more soberly and silently; the outermost circle consists of small boys and girls, more bent on play than on serious fishing. The men press forward, in a solid but irregular mass. The bolder spirits, who are able to swim, venture into the deepest parts. The boys who went in to spray the pool magically had been carefully watched, so that everyone knows exactly how far he can go with safety. Indeed in one pool the precaution was taken of sending four good swimmers in to test the depth before the magical rites were performed.

[1] The Tallensi are patrilineal—patrilocal, but cognatic relationship is conspicuously recognised. Members of the owner's joint-family and lineage, who will eventually receive a share of the tribute (see below), have no motive to hide their catch. Clansmen are bound by the rules of ownership of the pool like any stranger but the owner's kindred and affines trade on their personal relationship to him to get away with their catch.

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226 227 The technique of fishing is simple. The men move to and fro all the time in the centre of the pool: the women form an irregular circle round the men and keep to the shallow periphery. Men use hand nets (*wok*) suspended from a single, strong withe bent in a roughly elliptical hoop, about 18 in. by 8 in. They scoop at random. If a fish is netted a quick twist of the wrist secures it in the bottom of the net, where it is dispatched with blows of an axe-shaft or the fist, and then hung from the man's waist on a string threaded through the gill cleft. Large nets (*pal*) of similar pattern, 8 or 9 feet long and manipulated by two men, are also employed, but the proportion of these is extremely small. Women use a heavy, beehive-shaped plunge basket (*soyar*) about 2 feet high made of withes lashed together about 2 inches apart at the open end of the trap. At the top of the trap a circular aperture four inches or so in diameter is left, while the bottom, open end is about twenty-seven inches across. The women plunge this down on to the bed of the river every few minutes and insert a hand through the top aperture to extract the fish. Their catch goes into a small basket slung from a shoulder. Whereas men often land a big fish, women seldom catch anything above the size of a large herring. The natives explain this by pointing out that the biggest fish will naturally seek the deeper water in the centre of the pool, which is occupied by the men. Only fish escaping to the periphery will come the women's way.

226 571 The manual skill involved is however of secondary significance. Sociologically, the essential fact is that fishing is a group activity. Everybody fishes with and against his neighbour, his motor alertness and competitive cupidity at the highest. The excitement is indescribable. The glint of a fin through the water, brown with the mud churned up by the slow moving mass of men, causes a scrimmage. Pushing and shouting, a dozen men plunge their nets after the fish. In a well stocked pool the terrified fish leap out of the water, a fantastic and beautiful sight. Hands and nets swing out after the leaping fish, and the older men who remain on the bank watching call out with eager delight at the sight. The first catch of the day is greeted with a shout of pleasure, not very welcome to the fortunate fisherman, however, for the fish thus noticed cannot escape confiscation by the owner of the pool, as it is the ritual perquisite of the fetish.

226 578 579 Disputes are inevitable and may become violent. The rule is that a fish belongs to the person who nets or traps it. But a fish may be netted by one man, escape, and be at once netted by another, or a leaping fish may be pinned between two nets. Such incidents lead to an angry altercation in which the one who has the fish generally gets the better. Once a quarrel over a fish occurred between a man of the *Namoos* group and one of the *Tallis* group. The latter ran ashore with his fish followed by the *Namoos* claimant. In a few minutes a small riot had broken out. *Namoos* and *Tallis* rushed out, snatched sticks, branches of trees, fishing nets, and flew at each other. Only the intervention of a brother of the Chief of Tongo stopped what might have become a serious fight. The dispute over the fish in this case was the signal for an outburst of political hostility. Words quickly lead to blows in such an atmosphere of heightened muscular and emotional tension.

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The principal disputes, however, concern the tribute due to the owner of the pool. Morally his rights are beyond question and are never denied. But except for members of the owner's immediate family, who will eventually receive a share of the tribute, a moral obligation of this sort counts for nothing in practice without effective sanctions. Hence the owner sees to it that members of his family are dispersed amongst the crowd in the water. These young men keep a sharp watch and do not hesitate to take by force the fish which they regard as their rightful tribute. The owner himself often enters the pool to assist in the police work. Those who contest the confiscation of their fish do so in vain. Not only will public opinion not support them, but the owner's "policemen" would not hesitate to give them a drubbing. A maternal kinsman, sister's son, or in-law relation of the owner is, however, allowed to keep his first fish, unless his catch is large, in virtue of kinship. This is a concession which the owner might also make to his personal friends, and not a right.

One obligation, by contrast, is never evaded. Young crocodiles are sometimes caught, and the owner of the fetish is entitled to the hind legs and tail of every crocodile caught. This is the perquisite of his *bayar* one part of which, the hoe shaft, will be covered with the skin of a crocodile tail thus delivered to him. Not only is it very difficult to conceal the capture of a crocodile, but the supernatural penalties of evasion—certain injury from a crocodile in a future fishing expedition being the least of them—dare not be risked.

Fishing continues thus from about 1.30 p.m. to 4 p.m., or in a well stocked pool, to 5 p.m. The exodus commences sporadically. People who had earlier in the day been cutting hoe shafts or rafters, collecting firewood, or medicinal herbs, come out first to complete these tasks. Finally, when only a few remain in the pool, the owner of the fetish goes down to pull up his *bayar*. As he does this, he shouts to those remaining to come out. The removal of the axe shaft is the signal that the fishing is over.

The catch in such expeditions varies greatly. The tribute received by the owner of the pool may be taken as a rough index of the catch. In the three expeditions in which I participated the owner's tribute varied from six to fifteen medium and large fish. The last pool was exceptionally prolific and was fished on two successive days. I estimated the number of men—men only fished on the first day—at about four hundred; on this occasion the catch was declared to be enormous, surpassing all expectations. Few people left empty handed. But on the other hand, nobody had more than four medium or large fish, which would be taken home and divided up within each man's immediate family. The best proof of the paucity of the catch relative to the population fishing and of the valuation of fish as a delicacy rather than as an addition to the food supply, was that throughout the fishing month fish caught on these expeditions never appeared for sale at the market.

Clearly too, communal fishing does not benefit the owner of the pool much materially. However large his tribute, the net gain to himself is small since he distributes much of it to others—men of rank and elders who attend the fishing as an expression of clan loyalty

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and to give moral support to a man of their own rank, members of his own family, and the *bayardaana*, who, in addition to the sacrificial animals he receives from the owner, is entitled to a present of fish.

Why then do owners of pools call out communal fishing expeditions? They themselves say "because our ancestors did so." A more adequate explanation suggests itself from an examination of the fishing situation in relation to the technique of fishing and to the conditions of ownership of pools. Fishing with hook and line is practised by a few people throughout the year, but the technique is rudimentary, suitable for the capture of an occasional fish and not for the provision of a regular supply. The net technique, on the other hand, cannot be satisfactorily employed by individuals. It is essentially a communal technique. There is thus a practical necessity for communal fishing.

Principally, however, fishing is correlated with the ownership of pools. With few exceptions appointment to a chieftainship by the Paramount Chief of the Division constitutes the title to the ownership of a particular pool. Of the exceptions, I have record of one authentic case of a pool owned by a single lineage and transmitted according to the laws of inheritance. Tradition said that it had been purchased by the ancestor of this lineage from a chief in a time of severe famine. To organize a communal fishing expedition is thus a prerogative of chieftainship[1]. It maintains the prestige and proclaims the status of a chief beyond the confines of his own limited territory. Striking proof of this occurred when the Chief of Yinduri announced an expedition to his pool. When the people arrived there, the pool was found to be so choked with weeds that fishing was impossible. Someone from another settlement suggested fishing a neighbouring pool, belonging to another chief, instead. The people of Yinduri were so incensed by this affront to the dignity of their chief that they attacked and beat the offender. Besides, such an act of communal poaching would have exposed them to the penalty of a heavy fine.

Chiefs, consequently, desire large attendances drawn from a wide radius at fishing expeditions. Actually, however, the territorial range of the attendance at any expedition is limited by the factor of contiguity—the further a settlement is from that of the owner of the pool, the smaller will be the contingent coming from it; while the social constitution of the attendance is conditioned by the principles of kinship. Thus, a man will always accompany an expedition arranged by his mother's brother or other kinsman, even if he is from a distant settlement, since he would probably be permitted to keep his catch, and would be less drawn to expeditions under the auspices of non-kinsmen. Similarly, the *Namoos* clans turn out in far greater numbers to expeditions arranged by *Namoos* chiefs than to those of the *Tallis* chiefs. Another factor influencing the social constitution of fishing expeditions is that people tend to go in family parties.

[1] A commoner who owns a river, as in the case cited above, naturally follows the general practice and on the occasion of the fishing expedition enjoys a prestige equivalent to that of a chief.

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The modal factor in the situation is the magic. On one of the expeditions I attended the owner had his own fishing magic and made the sacrifices himself; but I do not know how general this is. Otherwise, the magician's office has its traditional warranty. It is an ancient privilege and even duty of his lineage to perform the rites for the lineage of the particular holder of the chieftainship. The association, like every relationship of this sort, is accounted for on the grounds of ancestral kinship. Thus a community of interest, such as could never arise in a purely commercial relationship, is presupposed. Functionally, whether the owner or the magician are united in one personage or not, magic enters into the fishing configuration as the owner's principal instrument of organization, helping to assert his status and rights in the fishing situation. This inference receives confirmation from the following observations: If a chief owns several pools, once the complete series of rites have been performed at the first pool to be fished, it is sufficient, subsequently, if the riverside rites alone are performed. Again, if, as sometimes happens, two adjacent pools are fished on the same day, the second will not be entered until it has been sprayed and the signal given. Thus the final and public rite, the actual organizing act, is emphasized. But the clinching evidence for this is the fact that the magical act proclaims the owner's responsibility for the satisfactory outcome of the expedition which he has organized. The behaviour of the people, more so, the ideology associated with situations of this type (full documentation of which must await later publication) and the purpose expressed in the magic prove this. Magic is, therefore, the binding factor in the fishing configuration, linking together the principal constituents—the objective facts of place and economic purpose, the owner, the people who come to fish and the relevant ideological principles.

The magic is able to achieve this in virtue of its content; that is, the control it ostensibly exercises over the psychologically critical factor in the situation, the dangers which might be encountered in the water. It is towards these dangers that the magic is *prima facie* directed. Its efficacy is never questioned; for even if, as sometimes happens, someone should be injured by a crocodile or fish, the ready explanation lies to hand that he has offended an ancestor spirit who took this occasion to punish him. An injury to an individual is his own affair. Nevertheless, nobody carries out private magic for his own protection. Again, fear of injury is not a deterrent to poaching either by individuals or, as in the case of the Yinduri expedition, by a group.[1]

It is obvious, therefore, that the magic is valid only within the context of the organized fishing expedition, promoted by the rightful owner. The psychological facts upon which the magic is built have relevance only within this context. The real danger, or the correlative fear of injury, does not precipitate a magical rite whenever an individual or group is liable to it, but only within the appropriate social situation.

[1] Indeed fishing expeditions are sometimes made to distant unowned pools and then no magic is performed, as I discovered during my second field trip in 1936. This is because these expeditions are informal, not organized by a responsible personage, and comparable to poaching.

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226 789 There the psychological facts are, one might say, re-created, socially transformed by the magic into a collective risk against which protection is provided by the very act which affirms its existence. The magic is concerned not with the safety of individuals but with the security of the group. Above all, responsiblity for the security of the group rests, in the last resort, upon the owner of the pool, the one who brings the group into being. Through the magic this responsibility is affirmed as a privilege associated with the ownership rather than a burden. Individual magical precautions would be as incongruous with this communal situation as a particular individual's chances of injury are unpredictable. In brief, the magical organization of the situation depends upon the exploitation of psychological factors latent in it; but these psychological factors cannot be regarded as the source of the magic. Ownership, magic, and organization of the expedition constitute a unitary structure the disruption of which would entirely alter the significance of any of the constituents.

121 At the outset of this paper the view was expressed that every type of social situation exhibits a definite structure. An analysis was then made of a typical social situation met with among the Tallensi. Various institutions (chieftainship) techniques (magic) and norms of behaviour (disposal of the catch) each determined in part by a context lying beyond the boundaries of the fishing expedition, were shown to enter into the situation. It was suggested, also, that the fishing magic is the factor which binds the different components into a definite pattern. The question arises why is it that situations such as this exhibit a specific structure? Is it due to the peculiar ensemble of institutions, etc., represented? Is it due to the nuclear interest—*viz.*, the catching of fish—of the situation? Or is it due to the fact that what we differentiate as institutions, etc., appear in such situations, as the concrete responses of individuals and groups to one another in terms of social definitions and psychological impulses arising solely from the situation itself? This is a problem which requires the examination of many types of situations comprising similar combinations of institutions, techniques, and norms of behaviour.[1]

[114] [1]This paper was written after my first expedition to the field, in 1934-5, as a Fellow of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.